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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NICOSIA 000744

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SUBJECT: CYPRUS: TURKISH CYPRIOT LEADER TALAT HOPEFUL ON  
UN-BROKERED NEGOTIATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic for reasons 1.4(b) and 1.4(d)

1.(C) Summary: "We are hopeful we will make a breakthrough," Turkish Cypriot (T/C) Leader Mehmet Ali Talat informed the Ambassador during his introductory call on September 12. Talat was pleased with the September 3 resumption of Cyprus negotiations that had broken a four-year stalemate. He warned, however, that Greek Cypriots, protected by the Republic of Cyprus, its international recognition and EU membership, would not be inclined to compromise unless made explicitly aware that there will be costs for failure and, conversely, benefits for success. Talat further noted that G/C redlines (a "no" to guarantor obligations for Turkey, for example) had hardened since the Greek Cypriot community's 2004 rejection of the Annan Plan. Talat rejected out-of-hand a likely Greek Cypriot demand for abrogation of the 1960 Treaties of Guarantee and Alliance, given "the long history of Greek Cypriot violence against their T/C compatriots." Regarding Turkey, he insisted that Ankara supported a comprehensive solution along UN parameters. In response, the Ambassador voiced continued USG support for the UN-brokered settlement process and solicited Talat's opinions over what the US might best do to support the process. End Summary

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"Threats and Incentives of a Solution"  
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12. (C) Turkish Cypriot Leader Mehmet Ali Talat told the Ambassador in a September 12, 50-minute courtesy call that he was hopeful the two sides "would make a breakthrough." Oddly, despite public T/C pronouncements for a quick resolution of negotiations, Talat was non-committal over timing, saying only that the pace depended on the "capacity and willingness" of both sides to deal.

13. (C) In an oft-repeated refrain, Talat said that the Turkish Cypriots needed a solution (given their precarious non-recognized status), while Greek Cypriots did not. G/Cs could live quite prosperously in its absence thanks to EU membership. He added that Greek Cypriots had to be shown "the threats of failure's costs and the incentives of a solution." Talat pointed out that the first round of RoC presidential elections had coincided with the Kosovar declaration of independence, which had "shocked" Greek Cypriots into rejecting the former RoC president and then front-runner, hard-liner Tassos Papadopoulos. Events in

Kosovo, he intimated, had foiled Papadopoulos' plan to drag out negotiations so as to link them to Turkey's EU accession process and wring out the maximum concessions. G/Cs needed to know what was at stake, Talat continued. Should the process fail due to G/C intransigence, T/Cs needed to be told that there would be benefits to successful conclusion of the negotiations as well as rewards for acting in good faith if the G/Cs pulled the plug again.

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To Counter Hardening G/C Position  
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¶4. (C) Proof positive of the need for incentives and straight talk with the Greek Cypriots, according to Talat, was their increasingly deep red lines, especially when compared to positions they had staked out during the 2004 Annan Plan period. G/Cs were even walking back from commitments made during the present process, he alleged. Christofias had now stopped mentioning "two constituent states" despite the fact that he had agreed to just that in the May 23 Leaders' Agreement (Note: That agreement, among other things, states that a future Cyprus will consist of two politically equal constituent states, which responds to a key T/C demand. End Note). Talat further complained that Christofias, at their September 11 meeting, would not agree that residual powers should revert to the constituent states once federal responsibilities were defined, despite the leaders (he claimed) having previously agreed on that arrangement. "Christofias has 'obstacles,' in his political partners (DIKO and EDEK)," Talat said. Finally, the T/C leader said that

NICOSIA 00000744 002 OF 003

the recent G/C objection to continuation in force of the Treaties of Guarantee and Alliance -- "even Denktas and (then RoC President) Clerides could agree on them," he griped -- was further proof of a "concerted G/C action" against a solution.

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"We want and need Turkish Protection"  
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¶5. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question, Talat said that the need for Turkish protection of T/Cs on the island was not an Anatolian Turkish conceit. Turkish Cypriots themselves want and need Turkish protection because of a real Greek Cypriot outrages against the smaller T/C community. He said that Turkey had, in the past, had intervened only in direct response to G/C attacks and killings of Turkish Cypriots. Not only had the Anatolians not been preemptive, they had always been too late. Talat said it was an "invented pretext" to think that today, Turkey would intervene "whenever" it wanted, in the absence of a real life-or-death threat to the Turkish Cypriots. Given the abysmal failure of both British forces and UN peacekeepers to protect Turkish Cypriots between 1963-74, the EU could not even be considered to become a replacement for Turkish guarantor obligations. Talat held the door open, however, saying that guarantees "had to continue for some time, until the opposite can be proven." (Note: Polling and discussions with mainstream T/C political parties indicate that the overwhelming majority of Turkish Cypriots support the continuation of Turkish guarantees and troop presence. End Note)

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"Turkey Wants a Solution"  
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¶6. (C) Talat said that Turkey wants a "comprehensive solution along UN parameters" in which the Turkish Cypriots were equal partners. In any solution, Turkey, as it had done in the Annan Plan, would agree to withdraw all its troops beyond any mutually negotiated number. He said that Cyprus was not strategically important to Turkey, but conceded that some in

Turkey believed it was. Talat complained that most Greek Cypriots, even Christofias, openly say that the Turkish military calls all the shots in the "TRNC," which is not true. Turkish Cypriots had deep historical and cultural ties with Turkey, and it was the only country that had aided the Turkish Cypriots when they were being slaughtered and helped them overcome their isolation. Without Turkey's help, Talat pointed out, they could not even make telephone calls abroad, post letters, or fly to Europe. When asked about Ankara's influence over him, he said that he had a good dialogue with the President, PM, MFA, but that he rarely meets with senior TGS officers.

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"US will be needed"  
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¶7. (C) Talat said he was generally pleased with USG support, even if it was not at the "expected level" (Note: Expected level would be active U.S. efforts to reward the T/Cs for accepting the Annan Plan, including inviting Talat to the U.S., increasing U.S. investment in the "TRNC," or establishing direct flights to Ercan Airport from U.S. territory. End note). Talat said that he gave "great importance" to the U.S. role on the Cyprus Problem, which would be "needed" when the process entered "great difficulties." He added that his "FM", Turgay Avci, would be visiting New York to attend an OIC conference held on the UNGA margins, and inquired as to the possibility of official USG meetings for Avci while in the United States, preferably in Washington.

¶8. (C) In responding, the Ambassador stated that the settlement process seemed to be in a "good place" right now thanks to the G/C leadership taking ownership of it -- a noted change over 2004. At present, the Ambassador continued, it would be better for the U.S. to "watch and

NICOSIA 00000744 003 OF 003

encourage," rather than to push specific policies on either side publicly. He wanted to learn how to "maximize USG efforts without getting in the way." That said, when problems arise down the line, the Ambassador said he was committed to trying to help after consulting with both sides.

He also promised to relay to Washington Talat's request for meetings for Avci.

¶9. (C) Comment: Talat did not venture into new territory during the meeting, and we have heard earlier and often from him the need to pressure Greek Cypriots, just as the G/Cs urge us to put pressure on the TGS in Ankara. Talat is accurate, however, that the G/Cs publicly have walked back from accepting the concept of "two constituent states", which is vitally important to the T/Cs and to which both leaders agreed to on May 23. We hope this is merely a negotiating tactic, not another G/C redline. This disavowal alone has already undermined the lukewarm support in the north for a comprehensive solution.  
Urbancic